

Gayle language

Gayle, or **Gail**, is an English and Afrikaans-based gay argot or cant slang used primarily by English and Afrikaans-speaking homosexual men in urban communities of South Africa, and is similar in some respects to Polari in the United Kingdom, from which some lexical items have been borrowed. The equivalent language used by gay South African men who speak Bantu languages is called *IsiNgqumo*, and is based on a Nguni lexicon.^{[4][5][6]}

Gayle originally manifested as *moffietaal* (Afrikaans: literally, "homosexual language") in the drag culture of the Cape Coloured community in the 1950s. It permeated into white homosexual circles in the 1960s and became part of mainstream white gay culture.^{[4][5][6]}

Besides a few core words borrowed from Polari (such as the word *varda* meaning "to see", itself a borrowing from Lingua Franca), most of Gayle's words are alliterative formations using women's names, such as *Beulah* for "beauty", *Priscilla*, meaning "police", and *Hilda* for "hideous". Men, especially other homosexual men, are often referred to by female pronouns in some circles, as is the custom among many homosexual countercultures throughout the world.^{[4][5][6]}

Gayle arose for the same reason that most antilanguages develop, to ensure in-group preference in diverse societies. However it also fulfilled other functions such as to "camp up" conversation, and provide entertainment in a subculture where verbal wit and repartee are highly valued.^{[4][5][6]}

Sample

Gayle	
Gail	
Region	South Africa: mainly in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town, Durban, Bloemfontein, and Port Elizabeth
Native speakers	<i>None</i> ^[1] <div>L2 speakers: 20,000</div>
Language family	based on varying mixtures of English and Afrikaans, with similarity to Polari
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	gic
Glottolog	gail1235 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/gail1235) ^[2]



Beulah Bar in De Waterkant, Cape Town, takes its name from the Gayle word for "beautiful".^[3]

Gayle term	English translation
<i>Abigail</i>	abortion
<i>Bag</i>	guy
<i>Betty Bangles</i>	police
<i>Betty Boems</i>	sex
<i>Belinia</i>	beautiful, gorgeous
<i>Beulah</i>	beautiful man, handsome man
<i>cha cha palace</i>	discotheque or club
<i>cilla</i>	cigarette
<i>conch</i>	vagina
<i>Dora</i>	drink or drunk
<i>Doreen</i>	drunk
<i>Dorette</i>	small drink
<i>Great Dane</i>	large penis
<i>Hilda</i>	ugly
<i>Griselda</i>	hideous
<i>Jella</i>	hurry up
<i>Jessica</i>	jealous
<i>KFC</i>	sex
<i>Mitzi</i>	small
<i>Moir</i>	music
<i>Monica</i>	money
<i>Olive</i>	attractive man
<i>Petula Clark</i>	passed out, unconscious
<i>Petunia</i>	to urinate
<i>Priscilla</i>	police
<i>Sheila</i>	shit
<i>varda</i>	to look
<i>Vera or Veronica</i>	vomit

Varda that Beulah! translates to "Look at that beautiful man!"^{[6]:23–24}

See also

- Lavender linguistics

References

1. Gayle (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/gic/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)

2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Gail" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/gail1235>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
3. de Bruyn, Pippa; Bain, Keith (2012). *Frommer's South Africa* (https://archive.org/details/isbn_9781118074787). Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. p. 135 (https://archive.org/details/isbn_9781118074787/page/135). ISBN 9781118074787. Retrieved 24 June 2014.
4. Cage, Ken (10 August 1999). "Gayle – Gay SA Slang" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20000818005936/http://www.q.co.za/news/1999/9908/990810-gayle.html>). *Q Online*. Mail & Guardian. Archived from the original (<http://www.q.co.za/news/1999/9908/990810-gayle.html>) on 18 August 2000. Retrieved 18 August 2000. Check date values in: |accessdate= (help)
5. Cage, Ken (1999). *An investigation into the form and function of language used by gay men in South Africa* (<https://archive.is/20140625081920/https://ujdigispace.uj.ac.za/handle/10210/6161>) (M.A. thesis). University of Johannesburg. Archived from the original (<https://ujdigispace.uj.ac.za/handle/10210/6161>) on 25 June 2014. Retrieved 25 June 2014.
6. Cage, Ken; Evans, Moyra (2003). *Gayle: The Language of Kinks and Queens: A History and Dictionary of Gay Language in South Africa* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=WSn7026sqcC>). Houghton, South Africa: Jacana Media. ISBN 9781919931494. Retrieved 25 June 2014.

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Gayle_language&oldid=956414502"

This page was last edited on 13 May 2020, at 06:31 (UTC).

Text is available under the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License](#); additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the [Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.](#), a non-profit organization.